

Letter from Taizé

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Property of
Graduate Theological Union

Prague, at the end of the year:
European Meeting of Young Adults

AUG 02 1990

Seeking a visible sign of communion

Since the announcement at Easter of the meeting in Prague, it has become clear that a lot of people see it as a response to their expectations. Many have a great desire to learn at first hand about the life of Christians who have undergone such a long period of darkness and to listen to those who participated in the peaceful revolution of last November. The people of Prague also have their own hopes about the meeting; here are some of the things they have written recently:

But it's not only a question of telling about our own life: it's so important now that we try to build a way forward together in the whole of Europe. In gathering together we shall give a sign of a Europe without borders. And quite recently still in our country, even though it has been alive within, the Church has had very little visible place in society.

Different ways before us

Now we are trying to find the best way to live. In our materialist society people were thirsty for a spiritual life, for prayer, and it was common for young people to gather in groups in each other's homes. An easy and natural community developed in these groups.

Now everything is coming to light and various different ways of living the Christian life fan out in front of us. This choice will help us rediscover our identity and the identity of the Church as a source of life, love and unity.

At present, all has to be rebuilt, every aspect of parish life is still very provisional, but we will have a deep faith to share — a faith which has guided us through all kinds of difficulties. And it is a faith shared by many young people here.

A universal heart

In university faculties, for example, you can now find rooms which have been converted into chapels where student groups gather to pray. People, who before were too afraid to come to church, now come and openly seek the values they feel they are lacking.

Although some people who work in the parishes feel inadequate to respond to such great expectations, there is nevertheless a great simplicity about the way new people are welcomed in the churches. We know that God welcomes each person individually and gives us a universal heart; and that is certainly the way for us to welcome those who will be coming to the European Meeting from other countries.

This year, 1990:

50th ANNIVERSARY OF TAIZÉ

It was on 21st August, 1940,
that Brother Roger first came to the village of Taizé
and started to live there, having a community life in view.
All alone, he began a life of prayer and also hid Jewish refugees.

The 50 years of Taizé will be celebrated
at evening prayers at the end of the summer.
The first celebrations will be held on Saturday 1st and Saturday 8th September.

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The strength of simple means

A lot of people say that the period of the revolution was a miracle. We had such a strong sense of God's presence, and that is how we discovered the strength of being united, the strength of simple means. The European Meeting will be, first of all, a celebration of the gift we have received, a thanksgiving together with as many people as possible. It will also be, on another level, an opportunity to renew our experience of the strength which comes through trusting in God.

An inner determination

Many people are looking towards the Church now that it has come out of the catacombs and become public. But too often we Christians forget to have the humility we should when speaking of the Church.

When the pope visited Czechoslovakia, for example, he congratulated us for having known how to suffer in order to keep our faith, and it was easy to forget that we too had participated in that climate of fear and mistrust which existed before, even between Christians. Now I hope we shall be able to hold onto the values which have served us so well before: an inner determination and the ability to bind our lives to Christ by continually referring to the vertical dimension of our faith.

We had no choice: our life of Christian community was almost entirely restricted to church services. And now, this life of the catacombs has suddenly ended. How can we avoid being either nostalgic for the ease of obscurity, or drunk with the light? Up till now, Christians have been held in high esteem by almost everyone in society. Hopefully, we shall now be capable of giving an example by our kindness, by our forgiveness, by the frank avowal of our share of responsibility for what has gone before, and by our care for those in need.

Renewing our life at the roots

The November revolution turned our life upside down, and many of us feel called to take an active part in the tumult of political life. The balance between action and contemplation has become a dream rarely fulfilled. The certainties we had about our society before have evaporated and we know that this period of transition is bound to last several years at least.

We now need to renew our life at the roots, in Christ, in order to rediscover an inner balance and to be witnesses to Christ. In this respect, I have many hopes of the meeting at the end of the year. I hope it will be a clear sign of the communion in Christ which the Church is. For students like me, whether Christian or not, it will be a chance to meet Christ in the universality of the Church, a chance to find the liberation which he offers in the heart of each one of us. ▸

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The Community of Taizé has no capital reserves, it does not accept any gifts, donations, family inheritances or any other contribution whatsoever for itself. Its only income comes from its own work.

However, at the present time, Operation Hope is in need of contributions for two necessities outside Taizé:

1. to defray part of the cost of the journeys of the young people from Asia, Africa and Latin America, who come for the meetings. There is a large deficit at the moment in this.

2. New Testaments (extracts) for young people, to be printed and sent by Taizé to Eastern Europe.

For these two necessities, contributions may be sent to:

UK: "Operation Hope", Bank Account no. 44495090, Coutts and Co., Duncannon Branch, 440 Strand, LONDON WC2R 0QS
USA: "Operation Hope", c/o Taizé, 413 W. 48th St., New York NY 10036.
IRELAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, SOUTH AFRICA, etc.: contributions may be sent in the same way as sums for subscriptions to the Letter from Taizé, making sure to indicate with your payment "for Operation Hope".

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"Without love, I am nothing"

Recently the bible-study group at Taizé centered on a passage of Saint Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13.1-3):

Twenty-five years after the first Pentecost, in the young Church of Corinth, a question arose which is still a question for us today. What is it that makes a Christian community a clear reflection of the presence of Christ? How may the Church become so transparently open that Christ be recognised in her without difficulty, almost spontaneously?

To clear the way to an answer, Saint Paul begins by describing various aspects of the life of the Church (1 Cor 13.1-3). To begin with he mentions "languages", for since the first Pentecost, words had played such an important role. The Church was born by the communicating of the Gospel in many different languages.

If the Jewish festival of Pentecost already celebrated the Word of God being given to a multitude of peoples, the Holy Spirit endows the apostles of Christ with such a gift of communication that they become capable of announcing the Gospel to every person.

The gift of languages removes barriers between nations, gathering people together in one communion. Saint Paul even says: "the tongues of men and of angels". In a mysterious manner, the Holy Spirit gives communication not only between peoples, but also between those who pray upon this earth and that invisible world which sings to the praise of God.

And yet this gift of words and language, this wonderful instrument for gathering people in unity, is nothing but noise unless there is love.

Then there is prophecy, the knowledge of mysteries and the fullness of faith which corresponds to it. Christ is like a key to the understanding of creation's origin and goal, and for seeing more clearly in human hearts and in events. "In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2.3). And this knowledge gives birth to faith because the gift of prophecy is above all being able to enter into the mystery of God so as to know that he loves us and that we can, in the name of Christ, ask him everything (cf. John 15.16).

Jesus says to all of us: Seek and you will find, ask and it will be given to you. For God, much more than any human father, will always give what is good to those who pray to him for it. From this revelation, faith, which is a trusting hope, arises as if of its own accord.

But this fullness of knowledge and faith, which can move mountains, is, without love, nothing at all.

Last of all, Saint Paul mentions the sharing of possessions and martyrdom. Through the Acts of the Apostles we know that among the early Christians "no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own" and some even sold everything they had and gave to the poor. In times of persecution, many believers have not only given all their possessions, but their whole life as well by dying for the sake of Christ and to bear true witness to the Gospel.

And Saint Paul says that even that, without love, is nothing! How can it be possible? How can someone who, because of their faith, goes so far as to surrender their body to be burnt, still be lacking anything? One thing is sure: there is a difference between love and heroic acts. Love cannot be measured by its impressiveness. It has to be closer to us than we imagine, it needs to have something to do with simplicity.

Christ had a wonderful gift for language. He spoke so well that people would readily listen to him at length. And his words, passed on to us by the gospels, still retain today their incredible property of bringing down barriers, of gathering and uniting people in God. But at the end he was silent, accepting, out of love, the powerlessness of his words. He did not try to convince his judges, he did not threaten those who maltreated him. He loved in silence.

No human being has been as intimate with God as Christ. God his Father, had shown him everything, and he could ask him anything. But, out of love, Jesus accepted not to see everything clearly and to need to pray, "My God, why?" When they called on him to perform a miracle and come down off the cross, he did not want to make use of his closeness to God to prove to his mockers their mistake. For love never makes use of its knowledge or faith in order to prove others wrong.

On the cross, Jesus gave up his body. But his death is not especially impressive. Many martyrs died with more pride, heroically confessing their convictions to the end. There have been people of justice who have turned their own dying agony into a final cry of protest against the world's injustice.

As for Christ, during his last days in Jerusalem, he looked on attentively as a poor widow gave her two small coins for God (cf. Mark 12.41-44). He saw himself in her. He knew that his death on the cross would appear insignificant to many people. He died in the same way as an innocent child would die who does not yet know how to stand up to his torturers with a final effort and cry their injustice and their shame.

Could love be this: in Christ's steps, accepting the limitations of even our best gifts, entrusting ourselves and our unfinished task to God to let him accomplish his work of resurrection in our lives? To have love is to have Christ living in us.

Meditating on the word

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Johannine Hours

Psalm 131 (130)

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow.

Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Sat Jn 14.26-27 • Hab 3.18-19

I shall rejoice in the Lord, I shall exult in God my saviour.

SUN Jr 20.7-9 • Mt 16.21-27

Jesus said: If anyone wants to follow me, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Mon Lk 4.14-22 • Ep 1.1-6

God chose us in Christ, before the world was made, to be holy and faultless before him in love.

Tue Lk 4.22-30 • Ep 1.7-10

God has let us know the mystery of his good purpose: to bring all things together under Christ as head.

Wed Lk 4.38-41 • Ep 1.11-14

In Christ you have heard the word of truth and the good news of your salvation. And having put your trust in it, you have received the mark of the Holy Spirit.

Thu Ep 1.15-23 • Lk 4.42-44

Jesus said: I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because that is why I was sent.

Fri Lk 5.1-11 • Ep 2.4-6

When we were dead in our sins, God brought us to life with Christ.

Sat Rm 8.28-30 • Mt 1.18-23

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

SUN Mt 18.15-20 • Rm 13.8-10

All the commandments can be summed up in this: Love your neighbour as yourself.

Mon Ep 2.12-13 • Lk 5.12-16

Large crowds gathered to hear Jesus and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Tue Lk 5.17-26 • Ep 2.14-18

Christ came to announce the joyful message of peace: peace to those who are far away, peace to those who are near. Through him, in one Spirit, we all have free access to the Father.

12 Wed Lk 5.33-39 • Ep 2.19-22

In Christ, you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by the Spirit.

13 Thu Lk 6.6-11 • Ep 3.2-6

The mystery of Christ is that all peoples now share the same inheritance, being members of one body, and having received the same promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel.

14 Fri Lk 6.12-19 • Ep 3.7-13

Through our faith in Christ Jesus, we can be bold enough to approach God with complete confidence.

15 Sat Ep 3.14-21 • Lk 6.20-23

Looking at his disciples, Jesus said: Happy are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.

16 SUN Si 28.1-5 • Mt 18.21-22

Peter asked Jesus, "How many times should I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

17 Mon Ep 4.1-6 • Lk 6.27-35

Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

18 Tue Lk 6.36-38 • Ep 4.11-16

If we live in love and in truth, then in all things we shall grow into Christ, who is the head. By him, the whole body grows and builds itself up in love.

19 Wed Ep 4.22-24 • Lk 6.46-49

Jesus said: Whoever comes to me, listens to my words and acts on them is like someone building a house who digs down deep and lays the foundations on rock.

20 Thu Lk 7.1-10 • Ep 4.32-5.2

Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

21 Fri Ep 5.8-14 • Mt 9.9-13

St MATTHEW As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

22 Sat Lk 7.18-23 • Ep 6.14-20

Pray in the Spirit at all times. Never tire of praying for all God's people.

23 SUN Mt 20.1-16 • Is 55.6-9

Turn to the Lord who will pardon freely. For, thus says the Lord, my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.

24 Mon Lk 7.24-28 • Ezk 12.21-25

The days are coming when every vision will be fulfilled and there will be no more futile visions or deceptive prophecies, since I, the Lord shall speak what I will. And what I say will come true without delay.

25 Tue Lk 7.36-50 • Ezk 16.60-63

The Lord says: I shall renew my covenant with you, and you will know that I am the Lord when I forgive you for everything you have done.

26 Wed Lk 8.4-8 • Ezk 34.11-16

The Lord says: I will take care of my flock. I shall look for the lost sheep, bring back the strays, bandage the injured and strengthen the sick. I shall watch over the one that is healthy and strong.

27 Thu Ezk 34.22-27 • Lk 8.11-15

Jesus said: The seed is the word of God. The seed that fall on good soil, this is people who live according to the word and yield a rich harvest because they persevere.

28 Fri Lk 8.22-25 • Ezk 36.25-28

The Lord says: I will give you a new heart. I will remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh. I shall put my Spirit in you.

29 Sat Ezk 37.11-14 • Lk 8.43-48

Jesus said to the woman he had healed: Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace.

30 SUN Mt 21.28-32 • Ph 2.6-11

Being in every way like a human being, Christ Jesus was humbler yet, and became obedient to death, death on a cross. Therefore God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.

This little psalm sums up admirably the basic attitude of a believer in the image of a little child on its mother's lap. We are familiar with the image of a child from the preaching of Jesus (cf. Mt 18.1-4; Mk 10.13-16) and so we are in danger of being a bit too accustomed to it, of missing its astonishing, even revolutionary character (cf. Mk 10.24).

The attitude of humility or spiritual poverty that we find in this psalm is the result of a long evolution in the Bible. It does not come from the rejection of the things of this earth: "od saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1.31). And this is above all true of human beings made in God's image (Gen 1.27). They are invited to enjoy the good things of creation, to put their talents to use and to fulfil their possibilities. In itself, wealth is thus seen as a blessing.

At the same time, since the Exodus from Egypt the people of God realised that God had a special concern for the poor and downtrodden. When they were nothing but a bunch of slaves, the Lord had liberated them and made them his own people. And each time they cried to God in their distress, they were convinced that God would open for them a way forward.

Gradually, it became clear to some people that too much confidence in one's own qualities or possessions could hinder a person from welcoming God's gifts. How could God fill hands that were already full by their own efforts? The only road, then, was to remain in an attitude of trusting openness, to view everything as a pure gift of God's goodness. Turning to God rather than trying to find a way out by one's own cleverness was found to be the only way to see still greater things (Jn 1.50), and to receive the whole world as an inheritance (Rom 4.13; cf. Mt 5.3-5).

● How does the image of a child on its mother's lap help me to understand who God is and my own relationship with God?

How can I "keep my soul still and quiet"?

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Meditating on the word

October

Johannine Hours

Romans 8.18-27

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow.

Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

1 Mon Rm 1.11-17 • Lk 8.49-56
They came to say to the synagogue ruler, "Your daughter is dead." But Jesus heard and said to him, "Do not be afraid, only have faith and she will be safe."

2 Tue Lk 9.1-6 • Rm 5.1-5
Our hope will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

3 Wed Lk 9.10-17 • Rm 5.6-11
While we were still powerless, at the time chosen by God, Christ died for those who were without God.

4 Thu Rm 6.4-6 • Lk 9.18-22
Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

5 Fri Lk 9.23-24 • Rm 6.8-11
Paul writes: We believe that if we died with Christ then we shall live with him too.

6 Sat Lk 9.28-36 • Rm 6.12-14/22-23
Now you are set free from sin and in the service of God, you will gain the holiness that leads to eternal life.

7 SUN Ph 4.6-9 • Mt 21.33-43
Jesus said: Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing and we marvel at it?"

8 Mon Rm 7.4-6 • Lk 9.46-50
Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

9 Tue Rm 8.1-4 • Lk 9.57-62
Someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

10 Wed Lk 10.3-11/16 • Rm 8.5-11
The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

11 Thu Lk 10.17-22 • Rm 8.14-17
Paul writes: You did not receive a spirit which makes you a slave to fear again; you received the spirit of sonship by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

12 Fri Lk 10.23-24 • Rm 8.18-25
All creation retains the hope of being freed from its slavery to corruption in order to enter the glorious freedom of the children of God.

13 Sat Lk 10.25-28 • Rm 8.26-27
We do not know how to pray properly, but the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness and intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

14 SUN Mt 22.1-14 • Lk 25.6-9
The Lord has destroyed the veil of mourning that enfolded all peoples. He has swallowed up death forever.

15 Mon Rm 8.31-39 • Lk 10.29-37
Having told the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asked the teacher of the law, "Who showed themselves to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" He replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

16 Tue Lk 10.38-42 • Rm 10.8-13
The Word of God is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart.

17 Wed Lk 11.1-4 • Rm 11.29/33-36
Paul writes: God never revokes his gifts or his call.

18 Thu 2 Tm 4.9-17 • Lk 10.1-3
St LUKE Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest may send out workers into his harvest.

19 Fri Lk 11.9-13 • Rm 12.3-12
Paul writes: When you give, give generously, from the heart; when you do works of mercy, do so with joy.

20 Sat Lk 11.14-20 • Rm 12.14-21
Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who are rejoicing, weep with those who weep.

21 SUN Mt 22.15-21 • Lk 45.1-6
The Lord says: Though you did not know me, I have called you by your name.

22 Mon Lk 12.6-7/11-12 • Ph 1.3-6
I am confident that the One who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the day of Christ Jesus comes.

23 Tue Lk 12.13-21 • Ph 1.7-11
Paul writes: I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

24 Wed Ph 1.20-26 • Lk 12.22-31
Jesus said: Seek first God's Kingdom, and all other things will be given to you as well.

25 Thu Lk 12.32-34 • Ph 1.27-30
Paul writes: You have been granted the privilege, not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well.

26 Fri Lk 12.35-40 • Ph 2.1-4
Paul writes: Be one in love, one in heart and one in mind; do nothing out of jealousy or vanity.

27 Sat Ph 2.5-11 • Lk 12.49-50
Jesus said: I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!

28 SUN 1 Th 1.5-10 • Mt 22.34-40
Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is similar: Love your neighbour as yourself.

29 Mon Lk 13.6-9 • Ph 2.12-18
Paul writes: God works in you to will and act according to his good purpose so that you may become children of God with your light shining out like stars in the midst of the world.

30 Tue Lk 13.10-17 • Ph 3.8-11
Paul writes: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the communion in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

31 Wed Ph 3.12-16 • Lk 13.18-21
Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that a man took and threw into his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.

In this passage, Saint Paul presents an image of creation longing for its liberation: it is "groaning". This description of a universe that is wounded, inhibited in its proper functioning seems to fit well the reality of the world as we know it — so many unfulfilled desires, wasted resources, wrong roads...

But the apostle's message goes far beyond simply taking note of an unfortunate situation. It is, in fact, good news, for the yearning of creation is described in terms of the pangs of childbirth. For those who know how to understand God's language, the groaning is a sign of hope.

Still more important, the text speaks of the place of believers in this context, of those whose life is rooted in the Spirit of God. Far from taking them out of a world marked by imperfection and unrest, the presence in them of the Spirit brings them into a deeper solidarity with the rest of creation. Their sighing, the voice of the Spirit within them, merges into the longing of creation. Still more, these groans are prayer: the expression of a dialogue within God. So why be worried that we are unable to pray properly? Through the Son and the Spirit, God has become one with creation to such an extent that the cry of the creature's wounded heart becomes the driving force of its liberation. Our poor and clumsy words are turned into God's own language. Our longing for the fullness of life becomes the expression of an authentic hope, one that cannot be disappointed (cf. Romans 5.5).

● Does hope play a role in my life? What signs of hope do I see around me?

How can our faith enable us to live in deeper solidarity with the sufferings of the human family with the "groaning of creation"?

How do Saint Paul's words in verses 26-27 help me to understand what Christian prayer is?

or four days, 24th - 27th May, the splendid mediaeval cathedral of Linköping, one of the biggest churches of Scandinavia, showed itself in its original beauty: a good number of the pews were removed, revealing a wide area which was filled by those who came to pray. Late into the evening, the light of the northern sun shone through the windows beneath the vaulting, and then, little by little, the candles all around the church took over. From Saturday night to Sunday morning the cathedral remained open with the icon of the cross laid in the centre. As they prayed, each person held a small candle to the praise of the Risen Christ. Nearly two thousand young adults from northern Europe came to the meeting and sometimes nearly as many local people joined them in the cathedral at the time of common prayer. Many had never seen a church so full before.



Linköping, Ascension weekend in the north of Europe a step on the Pilgrimage of Trust

Listening to the bible readings in the cathedral, we suddenly realised that here were languages we had never heard before. Indeed, for despite many obstacles, 400 people from the Baltic states managed to come to the meeting. Because of a strike in Tallinn harbour they arrived a day late, but the joy of finally being able to welcome 25 Lithuanians, 50 Latvians and over 300 Estonians was all the greater. And some came from further afield: Moscow, the Caucasus, and even from Kirghizia!

The parishes around Linköping which suffer from having few people at their Sunday morning service nevertheless found the way to offer hospitality with a big generosity of heart, in the image of their bishop. The young people who were staying with a family often brought them along to the common prayer. Some other local people, having heard about what was happening by the television, also came in — it was their first time ever in church they said! □



Photos: Sabine Nitzschke, Dresden



Listening to the CONTINENTS

The Philippines

Opening a door

A meeting that will be another stage of the "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth" will be held in Manila in February 1991. "Originally, there was only a small group of us, going out to visit some of the parishes. We started to pray every Friday evening. Gradually this has spread until there are now around 100 parishes that are involved. Each Friday the prayer is held in a different place, and there is always a group of local people from the parish who prepare the meeting. They make the prayer known to all the people of the parish beforehand and welcome the others who come. This means the style of the evening is different each time but there is always an introduction to the pilgrimage of trust, an hour and a half of prayer, with the prayer around the cross, and a time of sharing people's concerns. It is beautiful to see people going out from their own parishes to discover others.

We are not used to long preparations. In the Philippines we talk about activities now and then the very next week we have to do them! And here we are with this long time to prepare. We have really talked about this and we realise the beauty of it. It is slow and there is a real development. Now we can see more and more people becoming involved and you can see the growth in people's awareness. This meeting is not going to be just one big event and then finish!

In the Philippines, one of the many gifts the Church has received is the closeness

of young people to it. They have much to give, and the Manila Meeting will be an opportunity for them to do just that.

Amidst the trials and hardships that we have, I believe that in the Philippines our trust in God is strong enough to keep us moving forward. We shall come together from Luzon and Visayas and from Mindanao, to express our desire for peace not war. Through the common prayer we receive strength and with this strength we can light a thousand candles. For me the meeting means opening a door to solidarity and closing another on what is perhaps an over-awareness of the diversity between Filipinos. We are living on separate islands and the meeting is a chance to build bridges that will connect all the islands, between all kinds of people, young and old together, so that we can go forward hand in hand on this pilgrimage of trust."

Estonia

What is our true value?

"The most important involvement our group has is caring for prisoners, prisoners of all ages, from children to old people. Contacts with some of them have lasted several years, and I have been able to see how the power of God has changed them, restoring their sense of value. To my mind, this is a key question for all of us: What is my true value? Usually we minimize or else overestimate it. In both cases there is a sorry result. I am particularly happy that we are able to bring hope into a prison-school for 14 to 18-year-old girls. We were there the day before yesterday taking bibles and recent religious literature with us. Eleven of the girls have been baptised, despite the opposition of the director. Almost half the girls show an interest in the faith and that gives me great joy. Other things are also happening in Tallinn: we have at last started a regular prayer using Taizé songs. It began when we were preparing for 70 young Estonians to go to the European Meeting in Poland. For myself, the meeting in Sweden will be my first journey outside the USSR. I'm looking forward to it, but the most important thing is that the prayer here continues. We need to be involved in a double struggle: between justice and injustice on the one hand, and between justice and forgiveness on the other. And to me it seems that the second struggle, for a greater spirit of forgiveness, is the decisive one"

Bangladesh

Finding courage and joy

"The meeting in Lokhipur has come to an end. About 300 young people from all over the country and of different denominations were here for several days. Every morning there was a bible introduction to the theme of the meeting: "Seeking signs of the Risen Christ". In the afternoon there were theme workshops: a Catholic bishop on the theme "Dialogue" (with other Christians or with Muslims); two young physically disabled Hindus on "Finding courage and joy"; an Anglican bishop on the theme "Christian unity"; a couple on "Marriage"; a local farmworker on "Social analysis"; a missionary priest who gave an introduction to a few hours' silence under the theme "The calls in my life".

On one day all the participants went, in ten groups, to meet Christians in the surrounding region. In each case they were welcomed in the church with a prayer led by the people of the village. Then they had a meal all together and visited families. For some participants it was quite a new experience to go as pilgrims to villages with a very different culture to their own."

Letter from Taizé

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